
Key Information - What you need to know for your High School Summer Semester



Pre-requisites – Students must:

- Be currently enrolled in 10th or 11th grade
- Fill out our online application
- Write a response (or record a short video response) to the application essay question
- Letter of recommendation from teacher or mentor
- Transcript from your current school including current year

Once application is completed and all associated documents are uploaded and reviewed by NCOAE admissions, we will contact you to schedule a live online interview.

Course Locations:

- North Carolina
- Oregon
- Ecuador

Course Offerings:

- Principles in Leadership and Environmental Ethics (PLEE)
- Natural Science
- Intermediate Spanish Language

Course Outcomes:

- Students earn 0.5 official high school credits in Honors/Advanced Topic in Natural Science
- Students earn 0.5 official high school credits in Spanish Language
- Students earn 1.0 credits as an elective credit in Outdoor Leadership
- All credits earned can be transferred back to your home school
- Earn certifications in Outdoor Leadership, Leave No Trace (LNT), and Wilderness Medicine

Course Tuition includes:

- Experienced Instructional Staff, certified in
- Accredited Learning
- Leadership Development
- Lodging and transportation during the trip
- Flights (*Ecuador Only*)
- All course equipment is provided for student use
- Access to our online learning management system
- All meals, admissions, and gratuities

Course cost does not include:

- Textbook requirements
- Supplies
- Personal gear/clothing

Student Expectations for the NCOAE High School Summer Semester**What You Can Expect from Our Program:**

- Our staff are dedicated to delivering engaging and individualized learning experiences.
- The program curriculum blends immersive field-based learning with classroom instruction to encourage both critical thinking and practical skill development.
- Course hours are full-day (8 AM –4PM), with additional evening study or reflective sessions as needed.
- Students will participate in realistic, hands-on learning scenarios that build outdoor leadership and science knowledge.
- The course begins with 7-day on campus component focused on Honors Natural Science concepts and leadership foundations, followed by 14 days of field-based, hands-on research and outdoor leadership experiences-finishing the semester with 7 more days back on campus.

The **entire semester** will involve structured lessons, research, independent assignments, and assessments. This design provides a foundation for the practical skills taught in the field. Students can expect a rigorous pace during the initial phase, followed by time to apply, review, and master key topics during the remaining field-based learning.

Our Expectations of Students:

- **Full Participation:** Students are required to attend all course sessions, activities, and field experiences.
- **Engagement:** Students are expected to participate 100% in discussions, lessons, and hands-on leadership training.
- **Accountability:** Students must maintain a strong academic performance and commit to mastering course material.
- **Commitment to Growth:** Students will retest or revise any work as needed to meet an acceptable level of proficiency.
- **Punctuality:** Students are expected to arrive on time for all scheduled activities, lessons, and group departures.
- **Resilience and Support:** Students are encouraged to ask questions, seek help when needed, and support their peers.
- **Community Behavior:** Students must act as responsible and respectful members of our learning community, both on campus and in the field.

On the first day of the program, students and families will review and sign a contract acknowledging these expectations.

FAQ's

What is the North Carolina High School Summer Semester?

This is a 32-day accredited program for 10th and 11th-grade students, offering a mix of academic and outdoor leadership experiences. Students earn credits in Honors/Advanced Natural Science and an elective in Outdoor Leadership, with opportunities for certifications such as Leave No Trace (LNT).

Is NCOAE an accredited school?

Yes. NCOAE is accredited by Cognia (formerly SACS) and is recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education, we are also accredited by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) and the Commission on Accreditation for Prehospital Continuing Education (CAPCE)

Who is eligible to participate?

The program is open to rising 10th and 11th-grade students from within the U.S and around the world who are looking for an academically challenging and adventurous experience.

What academic credits can I earn?

Students earn 0.5 official high school credits in Honors/Advanced Topic in Natural Science and/or Spanish Language and 0.5 credits as an elective credit in Outdoor Leadership. These credits can be transferred back to your home school.

What kind of outdoor activities are involved?

The course includes a variety of outdoor activities such as backpacking, camping, and canoeing or rafting as well as leadership training. Students also learn essential outdoor skills and participate in hands-on environmental science lessons and research.

Do I need prior outdoor experience?

No prior outdoor experience is required. The course is designed to teach students all necessary outdoor skills during the program.

Where does the program take place?

This semester starts and ends at our North Carolina campus in Wilmington, NC- we also journey into various wilderness areas throughout the state, utilizing its diverse natural landscapes for both academic and leadership training.

Will I receive certifications?

Yes, students can earn certifications in Wilderness Medicine, Outdoor Leadership and Leave No Trace (LNT) upon successful completion of the program.

How are the academic classes taught in the wilderness?

The academic curriculum is integrated into the outdoor setting, with lessons tied to the environment. Students engage in experiential learning, applying scientific concepts directly to real-world ecosystems and challenges.

What safety measures are in place?

Safety is our top priority. All instructors are certified in a minimum of wilderness first aid, and the program follows strict safety protocols. Additionally, students receive training in wilderness safety and emergency procedures.

How much does the program cost?

Please contact NCOAE directly for the most up-to-date tuition information. Financial aid and scholarships may be available for eligible students.

What is the student-to-instructor ratio?

We maintain a low student-to-instructor ratio to ensure personalized attention and instruction. Typically, there is one instructor for every five to six students.

How do I apply?

Interested students can apply through the NCOAE website. The application includes a form, a short essay, and a recommendation from a teacher or mentor. Early applications are encouraged as spots are limited.